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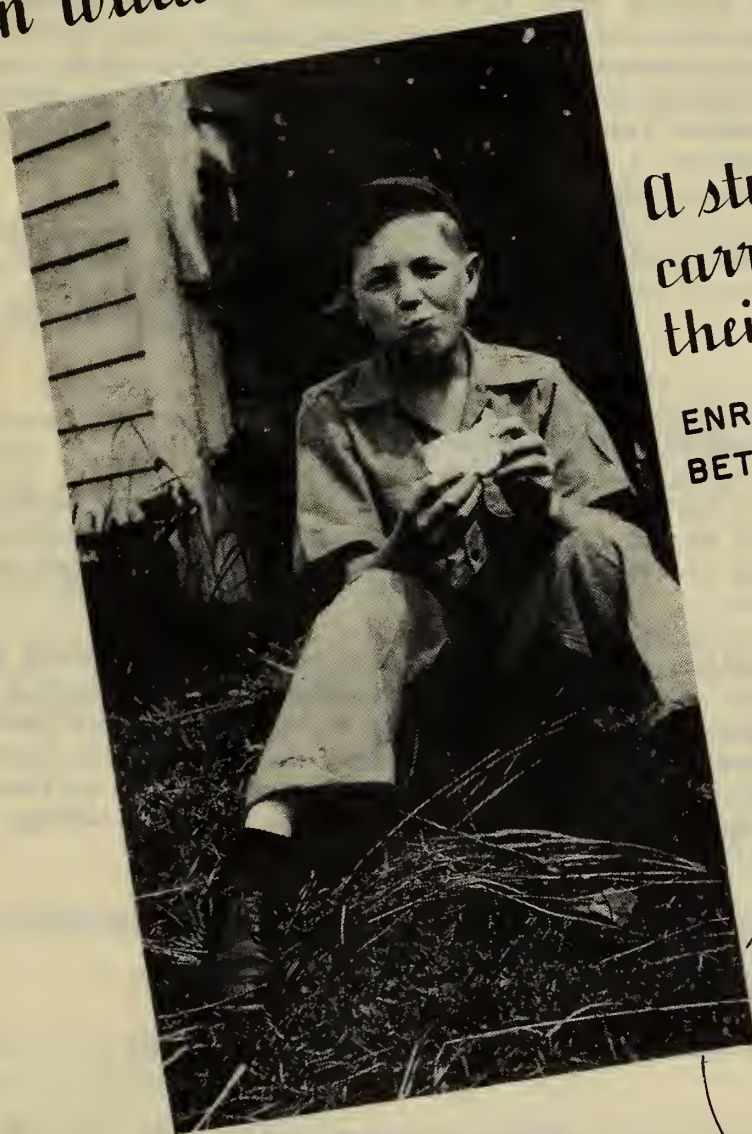
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U. S. Department of Agriculture

# Influence of NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERS in Waldo County, Maine



A study of how they  
carried information to  
their neighbors on:

ENRICHED FLOUR AND BREAD  
BETTER VEGETABLE GARDENS

This  
Waldo County  
boy gets  
plenty of  
**ENRICHED**  
bread every  
day

Report prepared by  
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Laurel Sabrosky, Asst. Extension Analyst

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Extension Service Circular No. 389  
September 1942

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER SYSTEM

The Waldo County study of the influence of the neighborhood-leader system, like similar ones conducted in North Carolina, Iowa, and Massachusetts, again proves the efficiency and soundness of the leadership principle. Voluntary leadership serves as the foundation of extension work and as the lifeblood of democracy. Without the enthusiasm, conviction, and faith that enter into voluntary leadership, our war effort would be in a sorry state.

The thousands of cities, villages, and rural communities, and the people who live in them, constitute the America which is now fighting for human freedom. They are furnishing the young men who will lead us to victory on the battlefield; they are furnishing the spirit and determination that will insure victory on the home front. By keeping their neighbors informed as to what they can do to carry on the war successfully, neighborhood leaders are serving their community, their county, their State, and their Nation.

*M. L. Wilson*

Director of Extension Work,  
United States Department of Agriculture.

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## THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER SYSTEM IN MAINE

For 20 years the Extension Service in Maine has utilized volunteer leaders in all counties and in 90 percent of all agricultural communities. When Secretary Wickard suggested the appointment of neighborhood leaders, it was an easy job to enlarge our present workable plan.

With the rationing of gasoline and rubber, the plan has been invaluable in taking information to local people and in providing them with a means of making their greatest contribution to the war effort. Meetings and demonstrations have been organized more on a neighborhood basis than formerly. Neighborhood leaders have taken an active part in many of the State and National campaigns -- in food conservation, rationing of sugar, the collection of scrap iron, defense-savings campaign, etc.

In connection with the defense-savings campaign, the State Administrator, Defense Savings Staff, Clinton A. Clauson, wrote in part as follows:

"I want to tell you how greatly I feel indebted to the Extension Committees for their work in our recent house-to-house pledge campaign. Without their assistance we could never have reached thousands of persons."

Just one note of caution certainly will be timely in relation to the use of these leaders. We must conserve their time for war effort and not expect them to perform every task or assist with every undertaking that those in Extension and many others think worth while. These neighborhood folk are the busiest people we have or they wouldn't be leaders. Ahead of their responsibility as neighborhood leaders comes their obligation to do their part to produce and conserve the food needed to win this war and write the peace. There is an ever-present danger that their usefulness in helping others will be dissipated unless our demands upon them are confined to the very essentials.

*A. L. Heering*

Director, Maine Extension Service.



INFLUENCE OF NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERS IN WALDO COUNTY, MAINE

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Waldo County study 1/ is one of four studies made recently to check on the effectiveness of the neighborhood-leader system, the purpose of which is to reach all farm families quickly by personal contact on wartime emergency matters.

Two objectives of the wartime nutrition program are, growing better vegetable gardens and using whole-grain or enriched flour. Information regarding these two measures was given throughout Waldo County by means of usual extension methods, and in a selected test area of the county, by usual methods plus the neighborhood-leader system.

One month after the neighborhood leaders had been trained on the two programs - better gardens and enriched flour and bread - a check was made on results of their efforts (1) in the test area, and (2) for comparison in a control area in the county where neighborhood leaders had not been at work.

Persons assisting with the survey.

Maine Extension Service: Kathryn Briwa, nutrition specialist.

Waldo County Extension  
Service: Philip S. Parsons, county agricultural agent,  
Barbara Higgins, home demonstration agent,  
Raymond Delano, 4-H Club agent,  
Mrs. Ruth Grady, special assistant to home  
demonstration agent.

Federal Extension Service: Florence L. Hall, senior home economist,  
Dorothy L. Bigelow, assistant in extension information,  
Mrs. Laurel Sabrosky, assistant extension analyst.

Office of Defense Health  
and Welfare Services,  
Federal Security Agency,  
Washington, D. C.: Margery Vaughn, nutritionist.

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1. This study was planned by Gladys Gallup, senior home economist, Division of Field Studies and Training, in cooperation with the following representatives of the Maine Extension Service: George E. Lord, Assistant Director; Estelle Nason, home demonstration leader; Barbara Higgins, home demonstration agent, Waldo County; and Mrs. Ruth Grady, special assistant home demonstration agent.

Effectiveness of Neighborhood Leaders in  
Waldo County, Maine

During June 1942, more than 90 percent of the families in the selected test area in Waldo County, Maine, were informed of the importance of growing better gardens and using enriched flour and bread. Neighborhood leaders - in addition to usual extension methods - were responsible for this high coverage.

Of 113 families, 15 percent heard of the need for better gardens during June through only the usual extension methods, such as meetings, news stories, bulletins, and radio, but 77 percent heard about better gardens directly from neighborhood leaders as well as through usual channels of extension teaching. Altogether, 92 percent of these families were reached by the Extension Service on this matter during June. See table 1.

TABLE 1.-Effectiveness of Neighborhood Leader System; 113 rural families  
in test area compared with 50 families in control area

Program	Percentage of coverage			Percentage of eligible families who responded	
	In test area		In control area /1	/2	
	By neighborhood leader	By all extension methods used	By all extension methods used	Test area	Control area
Enriched bread or flour . .	53	91	78	41 /3	0
Larger vegetable garden . .	77	92	81	63	54
More -					
Tomatoes . . . . .	78	90	49	65	39
Cabbage . . . . .	77	90	49	51	38
Kale . . . . .	75	91	36	35	4
"Other greens" . . . .	61	69	47	46	49
Squash . . . . .	54	88	49	40	39

- /1 An area comparable to the test area but in which the neighborhood-leadership system was not operating.
- /2 Total families minus those already following the recommendation or in a situation where recommendation did not apply.
- /3 Test period for enriched flour and bread covered June; for vegetable garden, the spring months.



Response to program on enriched bread.

How effective is the neighborhood leader in getting families to act? On June 1, 41 percent of the families in the test area studied were using ENRICHED flour or bread. On July 1, 65 percent were following this practice. See figure 1.

The latter percentage is in contrast to that of the control area, where only 35 percent of the families were using ENRICHED flour or bread July 1. They were exposed to the same extension teaching methods as the families in the test area, - meetings, news stories, bulletins, and radio - with the exception of the neighborhood-leader system.

Response to program on vegetable garden.

Sixty-three (63) percent of the families in the test area (of those eligible to respond) increased the size of their vegetable gardens in 1942, in contrast to 54 percent in the control area. Practically two-thirds of the

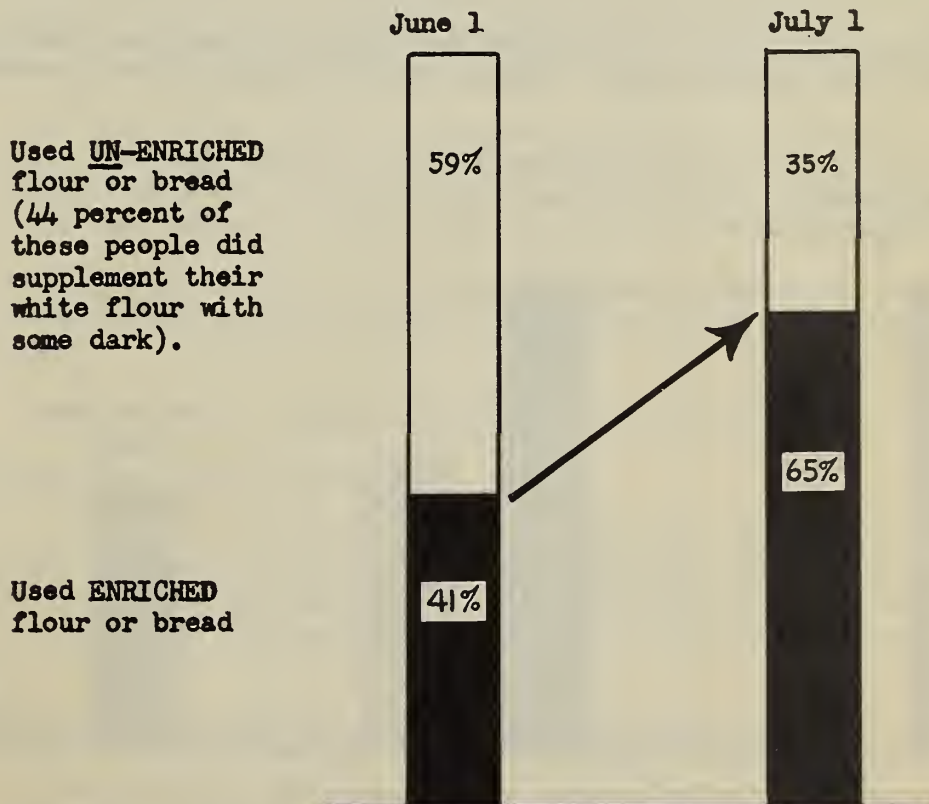


Figure 1. - Effect of neighborhood-leader work on use of enriched flour and bread in test area.

families (65 percent) planted more tomatoes than they did in 1941, in contrast to 39 percent in the control area. In the test area, 35 percent of the families had planted kale, as contrasted to 4 percent in the control area. See figure 2.

### SELECTING AND TRAINING NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERS

#### Selecting neighborhood leaders.

An assistant home demonstration agent, Mrs. Ruth Grady, was employed during May and June 1942 in Waldo County, Maine, to work with Barbara Higgins, home demonstration agent, in the selection and training of neighborhood leaders for work in two townships on two programs: (1) Enriched flour and bread; (2) better vegetable gardens with special reference to growing more tomatoes, winter squash, cabbage, kale, and other greens.

The purpose of Mrs. Grady's effort was to test the effectiveness of the neighborhood-leader system in reaching all farm families and getting them to participate in wartime programs. The particular area was selected because a study in this area in 1941 showed one-fourth of the gardens were not adequate, only half (51 percent) of these families canned tomatoes, and only 21 quarts per family; only 57 percent stored cabbage, and only 47 percent stored squash.

During May, Mrs. Grady, in consultation with representative local people, selected 21 women and obtained their consent to act as neighborhood leaders.

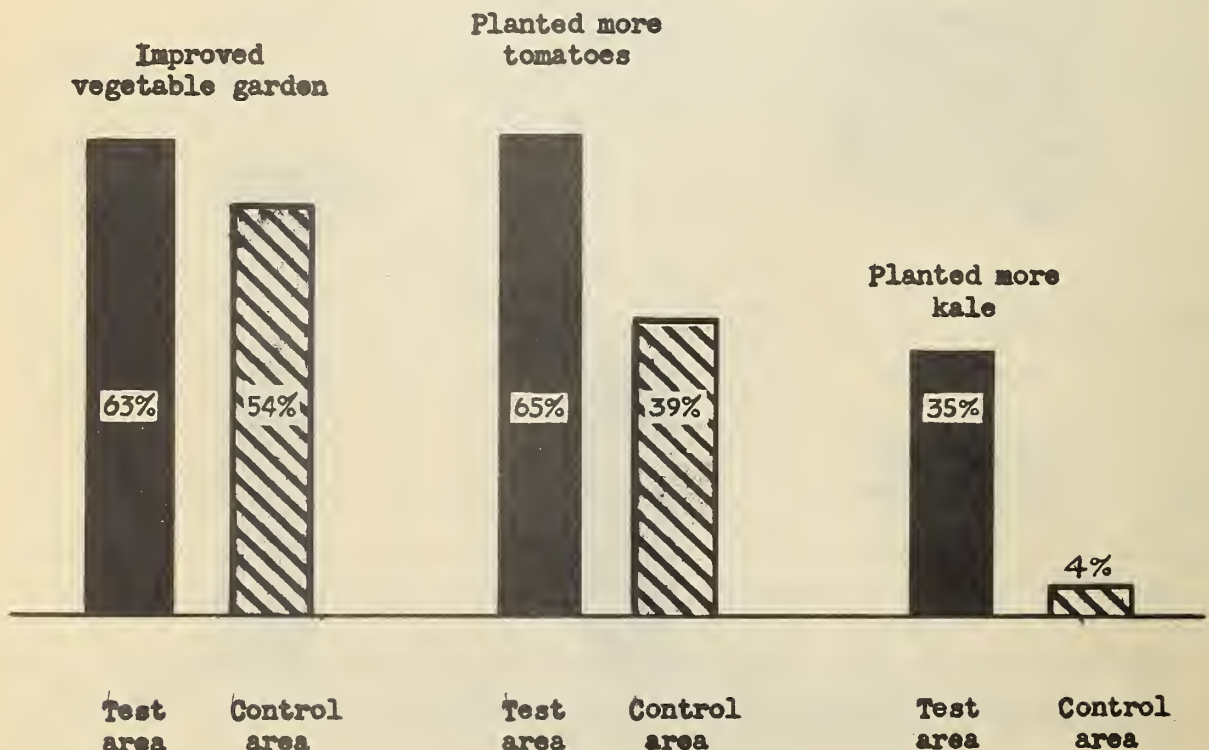


Figure 2.



### Training neighborhood leaders.

Through meetings with neighborhood leaders and home visits to those who did not get to the meetings, Mrs. Grady explained the need for using enriched flour and bread, tomatoes, and more green and leafy vegetables. She explained what it means to serve as neighborhood leader, i.e., to reach neighbors personally on a special assignment. Mrs. Grady emphasized their responsibilities in connection with these two assignments, that is, to tell their neighbors of the importance to health of enriched flour and bread and more vegetables, and to encourage them to adopt these practices.

Mrs. Grady helped these women to map their neighborhoods and list the families for which they were responsible. Altogether, 21 neighborhood leaders were responsible for 213 families. She read over with the leaders simplified leaflets for distribution, one on enriched flour and bread, one on gardens in general, and one each on tomatoes, kale, cabbage, and squash, to make sure that the leaders were entirely familiar with the reasons for using enriched flour and more vegetables. Both the WHY AND HOW of these two programs were emphasized with the neighborhood leaders.

### News articles and radio.

Mrs. Grady wrote three articles on enriched flour and bread and two on vegetables which were published in the Waldo County weekly paper. News stories on the work of neighborhood leaders and their names were also published.

She visited the stores to find out whether or not enriched bread and flour were available, making a list of stores that had these products with their brands and prices, and gave this list to the neighborhood leaders. She urged the storekeepers who did not have enriched flour and bread to stock it.

Mrs. Grady called to the leaders' attention the radio talks given weekly during June on the importance of enriched flour and bread and more vegetables.

## RESULTS OF SELECTION AND TRAINING

### The neighborhood leaders at work.

During the 5-week period May 25 through June 27 2/ the neighborhood leaders got in touch with their neighbors regarding the use of enriched bread and flour and better gardens. Most of the contacts were made through home visits. One leader invited her neighbors to her home for a meeting on enriched flour and bread.

### Checking on effectiveness of the work of neighborhood leaders.

On June 29, 30, and July 1 those persons assisting with the Waldo County study visited 113 families in a sample area of two townships. They questioned

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2. Neighborhood-leader work on gardens began May 25; on enriched flour and bread, June 1.

these families about their contacts with their neighborhood leaders to learn to what extent, as a result of these contacts, they were using enriched bread and had planted a larger vegetable garden with more tomatoes, cabbage, winter squash, kale, or other greens.

During the same 3 days, 50 families in a control area in the county were also visited and the same questions asked. The families in the control area had been reached by the usual extension teaching methods; i.e., meetings, news stories, radio talks, and circulars, but had no contact with neighborhood leaders.

In the Test Area, the Families Are Typical of Waldo County Rural Families

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<u>Percent</u>	<u>Status</u>
71 . . . . .	Live on farms
29 . . . . .	Live in villages or in nonfarm homes in open country
84 . . . . .	Owners
16 . . . . .	Renters
79 . . . . .	Have a radio
64 . . . . .	Have an automobile
34 . . . . .	Live on a dirt road
58 . . . . .	Take a newspaper (daily or weekly)
47 . . . . .	Homemakers have more than eighth-grade education
29 . . . . .	Men have more than eighth-grade education
27 (about 1/4)	Usually participated in Extension
24 (about 1/4)	Seldom participated in Extension
25 (1/4)	Did not participate, but read extension news articles, received bulletins, etc.
24 (about 1/4)	Had never been reached by Extension

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### OBSERVATIONS

1. Women accepted the neighborhood-leader job willingly, glad to assist in the war effort by serving in this way.
2. In any job neighborhood leaders are asked to do, the purpose should be made clear and directions explicit.
3. Neighborhood leaders should not be asked to take more than one assignment a month with no assignments during busy summer season unless very urgent.
4. In neighborhood leader jobs — one major teaching project (such as enriched bread) can be combined with one informational topic (such as collection of grease).
5. Neighborhood leaders may be encouraged, but not urged, to call meetings of their neighbors.
6. Material for neighborhood leaders' use should be simple, as attractive and colorful as possible, and not too much of it should be given them at one time.
  - a. Questions and answers are helpful.
  - b. Use common, well-known words, short sentences, and short paragraphs.
  - c. Itemize and number statements. Use underlining or capital letters for emphasis.
  - d. Use cartoons or pictures where practical.
7. Some weak points in the neighborhood-leader system in the study area.
  - a. One neighborhood leader did not give out material to neighbors.
  - b. Some neighborhood leaders sent material by children to neighbors.
  - c. Some neighborhood leaders put material in mail boxes of neighbors.
8. Public recognition should be made of neighborhood-leader work, not only to show appreciation of leaders' efforts, but to build up in the minds of farm people an understanding of this important new development.



### CONCLUSIONS

1. Neighborhood leaders are reaching many families which the Extension Service had not reached previously.

During May 1942, neighborhood leaders, plus usual extension teaching methods -

- a. Reached 91 percent of families in the test area on the enriched flour and bread program.
  - b. Reached 92 percent of families in the test area on the vegetable-garden program.
2. The face-to-face method of giving information, i. e., neighborhood leader to neighbor, brings quick results:
    - a. In the test area, 41 percent of the families were using enriched flour or bread on June 1, 65 percent on July 1.
    - b. Practically two-thirds of the families (65 percent) planted more tomatoes than they did in 1941, in contrast to 39 percent in the control area. In the face of a decided prejudice - kale is the common name of an obnoxious weed in Maine - 35 percent of the families had planted edible kale as contrasted with 4 percent in the control area.

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DISTRIBUTION. - A copy of this circular has been sent to each extension director; State leader in county agricultural, home demonstration, and 4-H Club work; extension editor; agricultural-college library and experiment-station library.

Neighbors compare notes on Victory Gardens. A group of women come to their neighborhood leader's home in a truck to save tires and gasoline of several cars. Their leader talks with them about the importance to health of enriched flour and enriched bread, and vegetables.



